ED 338 566 SP 033 312

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TITLE Professional Development for Teachers: Current Trends and Future Suggestions.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; College School Cooperation; Educational Objectives; *Educational Principles; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; *Inservice Teacher Education; Literature Reviews; *Program Effectiveness; *Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Creating an effective and efficient program for continuing education and staff development among elementary and secondary teachers has become an important issue. Unfortunately, problems inherent to the current system have sabotaged the best of these individual efforts, leaving little in the way of productivity to show for the efforts that have been undertaken. Problem areas can and should be identified and avoided, and a systematic method for further education should be implemented that could forestall or eliminate many of these pitfalls. The current method of continuing development is obviously not working efficiently, but steps can easily be taken to modify this approach to best suit the needs of the teachers, schools, and students. This paper relates findings from a review of literature on inservice programs for teachers' professional development. The review suggests that the educational system has not applied to its own continuing education program those strategies it wishes to implement in its schools Forty-six references are included. (Author/IAH)

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Professional Development for Teachers: Current Trends and Future Suggestions

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Abstract

Creating an effective and efficient program for continuing education and staff development among our elementary and secondary teachers has become an important issue. Unfortunately, problems inherent within the current system have sabotaged the best of these individual efforts, leaving little in the way of productivity to show for the efforts that have been undertaken. Problem areas can and should be identified and avoided, and a systematic method for further education should be implemented that could forestall or solve many of these pitfalls. Our current method of continuing development is obviously not working efficiently, but steps can easily be taken to modify this approach to best suit the needs of the teachers and schools and students.

Professional Development for Teachers: Current Trends and Future Suggestions

Professional Development among our elementary and secondary teachers has become a controversial topic. Most agree to its purpose, but few to the means used to achieve this end. "Faculty development is the theory and practice of facilitating improved faculty performance in a variety of domains, including the intellectual, the institutional, the personal, the social, and the pedagogical (Menges, Mathis, Hallibarton, Marincovich, & Svinicki, 1988, p. 291)." Griffin and Barnes (1986) have found that "research findings can be used effectively to change teacher behavior in the classroom (p. 586)", but are they? "Research conducted by the Office of Technology Assessment points to the lack of adequate inservice training as a barrier to the widespread use of technology in education (Salpeter, 1989, p. 20)."

LaRose (1988) believes that a successful staff development program must have two basic functions. It must meet the individual teachers' needs and also the needs of the institution. Intrinsic motivation has long been found to be the most successful motivator in the case of professional development (Koll, 1988-1989) and Gaskey (1986) claims that "most teachers engage in staff development because they want to become better teachers (p. 6)." Unfortunately, this does not seem to be adequate. Neil has found that "we can not rely on personal upgrading on the part of individual teachers to make coordinated programmatic efforts that benefit the wider society (1985, p. 79)." Not all teachers seem to be so altruistic or motivated. Currently, staff development programs have become a requirement for staff renewal and as a part of contractual agreements with local school systems (Gaskey, 1986) or they have become a requirement to qualify for merit pay or the designation as a master teacher (Duttweiler,1988; Kapel, 1985; Popkewitz, & Lind, 1989).

Also, "professional development programs for teachers are now state or locally mandated by most districts in the United States (Mulhern, & Buford, 1986)." Cooley and Thompson (1985-1986) have found that twenty-five states had mandated programs for staff development as of 1986 and nineteen more had plans to implement them. They varied greatly in terms of requirements,

monitoring, and funds available, with an average of two to eight days of training being mandated for each school year.

"Inservice education, rather than eradicating deficits, is seen as complementing and extending professional growth (Crickshank, Lorish, & Thompson, 1979)." Workshops have been found to have become the most common instructional development activity and the least preferred by faculty (Browne, & Keeley, 1988). As Smylie (1988) has found,"the enhancement function of staff development has not been very successful (p. 2)." This stems from the several problems inherent in our current system and policies. Funding for applicable and useful award bearing courses and school based inservice programs for individual teachers is decreasing or disappearing (McIntyre, 1988). The past year has seen a dramatic increase in the number of teachers having to pay for their own inservice training (Lodge, 1988). This seems to be at cross purposes with the goal of meaningful continuing education. Teachers will be likely to choose the least expensive and most convenient sources, instead of extended, challenging, or applicable coursework. Bishop notes that "districts that fail to allocate funds will not succeed in getting the desired changes (1987, p. 47)" implemented into their school systems.

Another problem is the specific content of the workshops and inservices that are available. Lodge has found that too many courses are poorly planned (1989) and that "the workshop leaders are often beleaguered administrators or supervisors who do little preliminary planning (Blake, 1988, p. 55)." Yatvin (1987) claims from personal experience that two fifths of the workshop is show, two fifths are ideas and products that are too abstract to easily apply, and the remaining one fifth is hopefully usable material, but often ephemeral, slipping from the memory before it has a chance to be used. "Inservice models generally are not designed to address the development and implementation of teacher education curriculum, nor are they designed to provide new knowledge related to teaching or teacher education ("School and University...", 1988, p. 3)." Wildman (1988, p. 44) has found that "very little of the staff development offered relates to the larger world of ideas" and instead of enabling teachers to question ideas or

to think creatively, most inservice deals with teaching theories.

Teachers see the development efforts they need as being remote and unknown to those who teach the teachers (Condeiro, 1986). Lodge has found that there is poor collaboration between the schools and the further education sector (1989). There is an apparent mismatch between what teachers think they need and what the universities think they must learn (Cordeiro, 1986). Further, there is a gap between ivory tower theories and day to day, practical realities and expectations. Universities offer workshops that are convenient to them, not necessarily what the the teachers need locally (Neil, 1985; Yatvin, 1987; Mulhern, & Buford, 1986) and often course requests by school districts were not heeded by the universities (Mulhern, & Buford, 1986). ("Schools and Universities...", 1988, p. 7) "Collaboration [between colleges and schools] is not the norm in teacher education" despite the profitability that has been proven to exist. Encouragingly, though, "university personnel say they wish to be more involved in the school programs (Dettmer, 1986, p. 101)" and some colleges are starting to allow districts to contract out what courses they want taught and allow it to fit into their graduate degree programs (Mulhern, & Buford, 1986). Jacullo-Noto makes an important point when stating that "in partnerships of the future, groups of [university] faculty will need to be directly involved with the schools on a continual basis (1988, p. 72)."

A further consideration is the time and support given to teachers to develop their potentials. "Teachers do not have enough preparation time for adequate attention to development activities (Mohlman, Coladarci, & Gage, 1982)." Bishop (1987) has suggested that a possible remedy might include paid vacation or weekend time for development, a half day off at school, a specific planning period, or inservice days. Also, Yatvin points out that it is essential to focus attention only on one area, and put all efforts into making change in that area (1987), instead of dividing attention and resources too thinly. Administrators must be willing to allow their teachers time to develop themselves and procure new strategies for teaching and learning.

Recently, "district administrators have realized that the quality of instruction rests not only with the teacher, but with the support staff as well (Reinhart, & Beach, 1987, p.. 363). Koll (1988-1989) has found that in the eyes of the teachers and principals, principals are responsible for creating a positive school climate to foster teacher professional development. "Staff development works when the principal is behind it (Puch, 1985, p. 24)." The principal must take a leadership role in the professional development of the school's staff, if growth and improvement are to occur (Koll, 1988-1989; Tindill, & Coplin, 1989). They must also act as facilitators between universities, communities, and teachers (Lambert, 1988). Turner (1988) believes that the program that has administrative support has the best chance for success. "Teachers will be much more likely to participate in and implement knowledge gained from the inservice classes if they know the district and their school's administrators support it (Lawrenze, 1987, p. 258)." Ashton (1984) has also found that support is crucial for the maintenance of motivation after the initial learning episodes (Bishop, 1987).

Another important consideration is the relevance of the material to the teacher. "Although often recognized as the major resource for professional development, school-based inservice education programs are considered by teachers to be highly ineffective in meeting their professional needs (Blair, 1988, p. 50)." It has been regarded as not being able to meet the needs of the participants, and thus is largely ineffective (Calabrese, & Bowser, 1988; Tindill, & Coplin, 1989). Kane (1985) has gone as far to say that "administrators and teachers caught up in the daily tasks of schooling often view the occasional workshop and afternoon lecture more as an interruption than enrichment (p. 19)." This is also true when workshops are given at inappropriate or inconvenient times. General attitudes about inservice and staff development range from negative to hostile in many school settings (Dettmer, 1986). Tindill and Coplin (1989) maintain that a "statement of philosophy for the staff development program should be developed and approved by those for who the program is designed (p. 22)." Since change is "accomplished by individuals, the personal feelings, attitudes and motivations regarding the innovation play a major role in determining the success

or failure of an innovation implementation (Dettmer, 1986, p. 107)." Options must exist, and teachers must be made aware that options exist, because options unleash a sense of liberation or personal power (Jacullo-Noto, 1988; Lambert, 1989). Participants in inservice training have individual differences in terms of identified needs and learning styles (Calabrese, & Bowser, 1988; Strong, 1990), so the learners' growth experiences must be individualized (Puch, 1985). However, "the *human* interactions that would intuitively seem crucial to successful implementation have consistently been ignored (Tumposky, 1987, p. 187)." Jacullo-Noto (1988; Lambert, 1989) believes that teachers need to take more responsibility for their own learning and that (Kane, 1985) research indicates that participation in decision making has motivational benefits. Puch (1985) states that if growth experiences are to be meaningful, lasting, and important, they must 'belong' to the learner, not be imposed by someone else. Teachers must be able to formulate and implement professional development plans in an individualized approach with support from their supervisors (Reinhart, & Beach, 1987).

Research has shown (Doyle, & Ponder, 1977) that teachers will implement those ideas seen as most practical - those that fit into their current ideas of teaching and are time and cost effective. If the teacher has an objection to the philosophy or values underlying the proposed change, the one- or two-workshop approach may not be effective"(Mohlman, Coladarci, & Gage, 1982; Tindill, & Coplin, 1989). Practices that the teacher views as fitting comfortably within his or her preferred way of teaching are more likely to be adopted in actual practice, but if it is viewed as difficult or complex and the teacher is not convinced that it is worth the effort to use it, the practice will <u>not</u> be implemented (Mohlman, Colardarci, & Gage, 1982; Sparks, 1988). "A teacher's perception of the practicality of a new teaching practice influences later implementation," therefore, staff development needs to attend to the philosophical acceptance, self-efficacy, and the importance of the suggested practices during inservice training (Sparks, 1988, p. 111; Mohlman, Colardarci, & Gage, 1982; Neil, 1985). "Most teachers use a very narrow range of practices; they expand that repertoire only

when they are provided substantial and carefully designed training (Showers, 1987, p. 22)" that has a high level of motivation supporting it. Allowing them to choose, design, and implement their own programs will help to do this.

The way in which our workshops have traditionally been taught also needs to be updated. "We have packaged innovations and delivered them to teachers through direct instruction. We have given teachers the information... and then hoped that teachers will somehow get the practice, feedback and coaching in the field (Lambert, 1988, p. 665-666)." (Lambert, 1989) We have not challenged teachers to inquire, criticize, participate, or create. Areas found to be lacking include time for direct observation, feedback, teacher involvement, no release time, no follow-up activities, and fragmented presentations (Blair, 1988; Neil, 1985; Turner, 1988). We need to tailor the length and intensity of inservice training to the types of practices being recommended (Meters, & Hendrix, 1988; Mohlman, Coladarci, & Gage, 1982). Showers promotes that "meager programs populated with 'onetime' weak treatments will not hold the strong content (1987, p. 22)" so programs must be ongoing, not one-shot affairs (Puch, 1985). These are both inappropriate and a waste of resources (Tumposky, 1987). There is no opportunity for the crucial, ongoing discussion of problems and concerns related to implementation (LaRose, 1988) that is so important. Gaskey (1986, p.6) believes that "staff development activities undertaken in isolation from teacher's ongoing classroom responsibilities seldom have much impact on teaching practices or student learning."

Teachers become committed to the new practices only after they had actively engaged in using them in their classroom. Dettmer (1986, p. 107) reminds us that "change is a process, not an event." Its effectiveness depends upon what occurs after the workshop (Browne, &Keeley, 1988). Lectures should not be the primary format for faculty workshops. Participants in instructional development workshops need time to design a plan for how the suggested improvement could be integrated into their own classroom (Browne, & Keeley, 1988; Meters, & Hendrix, 1988). Menges (1988), Meters and Hendrix (1988). and Strong (1990) all agree that the importance of active learning must be

emphasized. "Maximizing involvement of the participants is a major component that is essential to the success of any inservice program (Calabrese, & Bowser, 1988, p. 63)." If skills are going to be transferred to the classroom, there must be more than telling and showing. We need modelling, practice, and feedback (Strong, 1990). Puch (1985) tells us that the action plan must be concrete and tied to ongoing school activities.

Mohlman, Coladarci, and Gage (1982) suggest that clear, explicit instructions and feedback be given that is specific, familiar, and makes sense to the participants, for the greatest implementation to occur (Strong, 1990). Specific assistance in implementation has been found to increase success (Merters, & Hendrix, 1988). Goals should be very clear from the outset of the program and must be reintegrated at every step (Lawrenz, 1987). Menges (1988; Strong, 1990; Tindill, & Coplin, 1989) has found that goals are especially important to adult learners and show a collaborations between the leader, the members, and the cooperative learning activity. Workshop motivation is often high at the time, but without organized and successful support, it is rarely implemented later (Crowne, & Keeley, 1988).

Ongoing support for the teacher can also be found in other places besides the administration. Sparks (1986, p. 224) believes that "the provision of objective, nonthreatening peer-observation activities boosts the effectiveness of normal, workshop based inservice training." Confidence can be increased by implementing intimate, small-group sharing and problem-solving sessions for teachers. Small groups can provide support for change and a safe environment to discuss problems and successes (Ashton, 1984; Sparks 1988; Strong, 1990). A resource book of teachers' numbers that have succeeded in the program and newsletters detailing progress, problems, and successes among various participants can be helpful (Dettmer, 1986).

Frequent evaluations of programs and progress is also recommended. "Assuming that change in teaching practices is critical to the improvement of teaching, one finds surprisingly little systematic inquiry into the process of inservice teacher training and its effectiveness on everyday teaching practices

(Sparks, 1986, p. 218)." Evaluations are considered vital (Blair, 1988; Merters, & Hendrix, 1988; Neil, 1985; Tindill, & Coplin, 1989; Turner, 1988), yet there are few on a regular basis by any program. A major influence on a teachers sense of efficacy is the uncertainty most feel about whether or not they have on effect on student learning (Ashton, 1984). Simple and specific procedures for self-evaluation of effectiveness are needed. Teachers need to reflectively think and analyse their teaching to avoid feelings of hopelessness and promote change. Implementation and ongoing evaluation of a program is imperative if it is to be determined successful (Merters, & Hendrix, 1988; Strong, 1990; Tumposky, 1987; Yatvin, 1987). Further, "if salaries, promotions, or merit bonus of teachers are to be based on performance, then accurate measurement of that performance and provisions for that professional growth are essential (Duttweiler, 1988, p. 189).

Summary and Conclusions

What conclusion does all of this research lead one to? Our current system, while having many points in its favor, has many shortcomings. The educational system has not applied those strategies they want to implement in their schools into their own continuing education program. Teachers need to feel that the material they are learning is meaningful and helpful to themselves and their school district and community. They need to develop one strategy in depth and implement it, instead of trying to superficially learn many. They must be given the monetary, time, and social and professional support needed to accomplish this goal. Administrators and continuing educators need to assist them to this end. Active, hands-on learning and actual implementation must occur, with some form of evaluation for success and improvement. Incentives and content of learning should be meaningful. Surely, using some of the suggestions gathered here, the educators and their supervisors can successfully develop a staff development plan that will benefit all parties involved and discontinue the waste of resources and potential we now call "professional development."

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